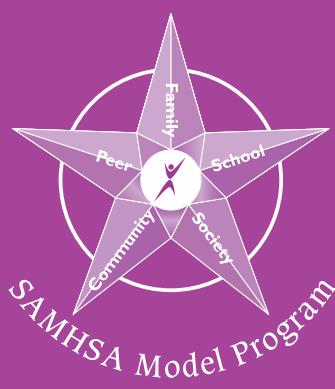




Wellness Outreach at Work

Proven Results

- 50% decrease in at-risk drinking
- 50% or better improvement in blood pressure control
- 50% decrease in other cardiovascular disease risks



The Wellness Outreach at Work (WOW) program provides comprehensive health risk reduction services to all employees at a workplace using worksite-wide health screening, follow-up, and health promotion programs. Five principles underlie the program:

- Employee outreach
- Comprehensive care, including cardiovascular and cancer-risk screening and follow-up health coaching that includes alcohol-use education
- Waves of follow-up mailings, telephone calls, and personal contacts
- Voluntary participation offered by friendly health promotion staff
- Long-term health-risk reduction support for employees in the corporate environment itself (e.g., low-fat cafeteria options, alcohol-free public functions, peer encouragement of health promotion, etc.)

INTENDED POPULATION

The Wellness Outreach at Work program evaluations reviewed by NREPP* were conducted at urban and suburban workplaces, specifically in manufacturing plants, university and hospital settings, churches, school systems, gas stations, and an airplane servicing facility. WOW participants have included African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White blue-collar, white-collar, management, and professional employees. The program also focuses on working adults 25 years or age and older, as well as retirees.

HOW IT WORKS

The WOW program begins with free, worksite-wide health-risk screening, including biometric measures of health status. Health screenings are followed by a 15 to 20 minute personalized coaching session that directs employees' attention to health matters, in general, and their own health risks. Some employees receive follow-up outreach, based on the number and severity of their discovered health risks. Employees are seen one to four times per year thereafter, based on risk factors, in sessions that take about twenty minutes.

WOW program interventions also provide baseline information about health risks for the total workforce, so at the same time, a worksite Wellness Committee looks at company policies and practices that could improve employee health, and creates activities and peer support for health improvement. The committee typically meets once a month to assess how well WOW is working, sponsor health improvement activities, give generalized feedback to the health coaches, and to discuss health-relevant policies with company management.

As employees lower their health risks, health counselors see them less frequently, and a supportive social environment at work helps them maintain their health gains. Periodic reports to company management and to the



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Outcomes

- Screening plus exit counseling reduces alcohol consumption for about 75% of persons whose drinking puts them at-risk for later health problems.
- 33% of the obese lose and maintain ten or more pounds of weight loss three years later.
- Employees report—and biometric measurements corroborate—increased personal exercise, more successful stress management, improved relations with co-workers, and a heightened sense of well-being.
- Companies report decreased absenteeism, improved morale, and heightened product

Wellness Committee track measurable changes in health risks for the employee population and gains in the work environment.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

A comprehensive implementation guide provides step-by-step instructions for implementing Wellness Outreach at Work and is available through the developer's Web site, www.ilir.umich.edu. Critical elements for successful program outcomes include: management support; union involvement (where applicable); guaranteed confidentiality of employee records; space(s) at the worksite to counsel employees confidentially; and computerized data management.

Successful program outcomes also require a Wellness Committee; ample staff of trained wellness professionals with appropriate supervisory oversight and support (ratio of counselors to employees = 1 FTE counselor per 500 employees); use of program interaction protocol guidelines with clients, adapted to their personal lifestyle and preferences; and program resources and materials concerning each cardiovascular disease risk factor, including alcohol consumption guidelines.

It is essential to use CVD Health Risk Screening meeting current Nation Institutes on Health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) guidelines for health risk profiles and appropriate interventions. Necessary equipment includes blood pressure measuring equipment, immediate blood analyzers using finger-stick blood draws, weight scales and body fat measuring instruments.

PROGRAM DEVELOPERS

The Worker Health Program (WHP) was established at the University of Michigan's Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations in 1973, with Michigan and Regional Medical Programs funding to design, evaluate, and disseminate innovative techniques for improving the health of workers. WHP co-founders John C. Erfurt and Andrea Foote conducted demonstration research in automobile plants, post office branches, public works departments, and small businesses that investigated the cardiovascular risks and substance abuse issues of employed populations. From 1990 to 1999, the WHP was instrumental in developing national standards for worksite wellness programs. The Association of Worksite Health Promotion adopted these standards in 1999.

* National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices

*Program detail and citations can be obtained at
<http://modelprograms.samhsa.gov>*

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